



September 25



## Apart but Not Abandoned

Linda Washington



*Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up.* [Acts 20:32](#)

Read: [Acts 20:17–20, 35–38](#)

Bible in a Year: [Song of Solomon 6–8; Galatians 4](#)

I had a lump in my throat as I said good-bye to my niece on the eve of her move to Massachusetts to attend graduate school at Boston University. Though she had been away four years as an undergraduate, she hadn't left our state. A two and a one-half-hour drive easily reunited us. Now she would be more than 800 miles away. No longer would we meet regularly to talk. I had to trust that God would take care of her.

Paul likely felt the same way as he said good-bye to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Having established the church and taught them for three years, Paul concluded these elders to be as close as family to him. Now that Paul was headed to Jerusalem, he would not see them again.

But Paul had parting advice for the Ephesians. Though they would no longer have Paul as their teacher, the Ephesians did not have to feel abandoned. God would continue to train them through “the word of his grace” (Acts 20:32) to lead the church. Unlike Paul, God would always be with them.

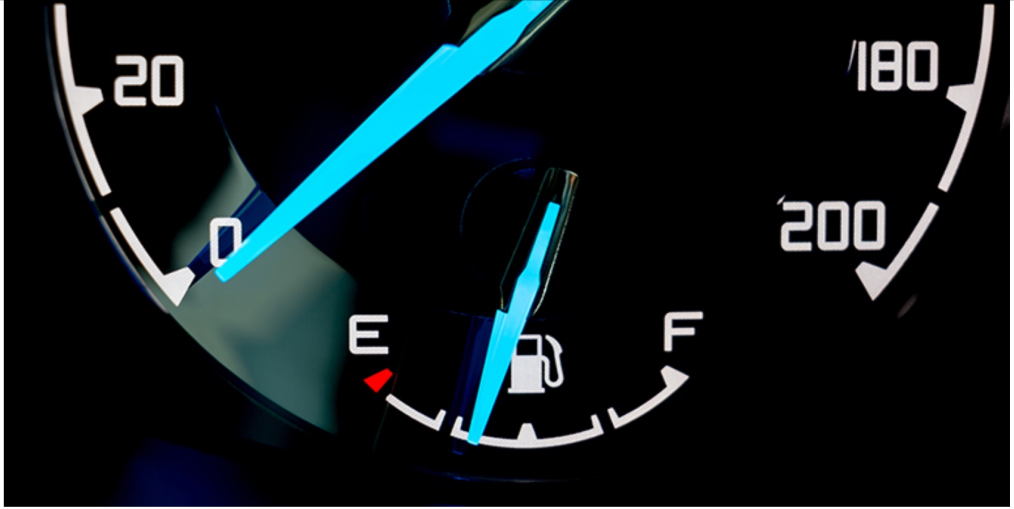
Whether it's children we launch from the nest or other family and friends who move away—saying good-bye can be very difficult. They move beyond our influence and into their new lives. When we let go of their hands, we can trust that God has them in His. He can continue to shape their lives and meet their real needs—more than we ever could.

*Lord, help us to trust that Your watchful care extends over those we hold dear who are far away from us.*

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**Though we're far away from those we love, they are never far from God.**

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September 26



## From Empty to Full

Kirsten Holmberg



*When all the jars were full ... the oil stopped flowing. [2 Kings 4:6](#)*

**Read:** [2 Kings 4:1–7](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Isaiah 1–2](#); [Galatians 5](#)

A popular children's book tells the story of a poor, country boy who took off his cap to honor the king. An identical hat appeared instantly in its place on his head, inciting the king's anger for what appeared to be disrespect. Bartholomew removed hat after hat while being escorted to the palace for punishment. Each time, a new one appeared in its place. The hats grew increasingly fancy, bearing precious jewels and feather plumes. The 500th hat was the envy of King Derwin, who pardoned Bartholomew and purchased the hat for 500 pieces of gold. At last, Bartholomew's head was bare; he walked home with freedom *and* money to support his family.

A widow came to Elisha in financial distress, fearing her children would be sold into slavery to pay her debts (2 Kings 4). She had no assets other than a jar of oil. God multiplied that oil to fill enough borrowed jars to settle the debts plus care for their daily needs (v. 7).

God provided financially for the widow in much the same way He provides salvation for me. I am bankrupted by sin, but Jesus paid my debt—and offers me eternal life as well! Without Jesus, we are each like the poor, country boy with no means to pay our King for our offenses against Him. God miraculously supplies the extravagant ransom for us, and ensures that those who trust in Him will have life abundant forever.

*Thank You, Lord, for paying my debt through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I had nothing; You paid it all for me.*

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**Jesus's sacrifice pays for our spiritual debt.**

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September 27



## Clothes for the Climate

David C. McCasland



*Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*  
**Colossians 3:14**

**Read:** [Colossians 3:8–17](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Isaiah 3–4](#); [Galatians 6](#)

While removing the price tag from an item of winter clothing I had purchased, I smiled at these words on the back: “WARNING: This innovative product will make you want to go outdoors and stay there.” When properly clothed for the climate, a person can survive and even thrive in harsh and changing weather conditions.

The same principle is true in our spiritual lives. As followers of Jesus, our all-weather spiritual wardrobe has been prescribed by the Lord in His Word, the Bible. “As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, *clothe* yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. . . . Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12–13 emphasis added).

These garments that God provides—such as kindness, humility, and gentleness—allow us to meet hostility and criticism with patience, forgiveness, and love. They give us staying power in the storms of life.

When we face adverse conditions at home, school, or work, the “clothing” God tells us to wear protects us and enables us to make a positive difference. “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (v. 14).

Dressing according to God’s guidelines doesn’t change the weather—it equips the wearer.

*Heavenly Father, help me to put on Your garment of love so that I am prepared for whatever life brings me today.*

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**Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life.**

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September 28



## The Day I Couldn't Pray

Randy Kilgore



*The Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.* [Romans 8:26](#)

Read: [Romans 8:22–26](#)

Bible in a Year: [Isaiah 5–6](#); [Ephesians 1](#)

In November 2015, I learned I needed open-heart surgery. Surprised and a little shaken, I was naturally drawn to think about the possibility of death. Were there relationships I needed to mend? Were there financial matters I needed to attend to for my family? Was there work that could be done ahead of time? And what about work that couldn't wait; who should I hand that off to? It was a time to both act and pray.

*Except I couldn't do either.*

My body was so weary and my mind so fatigued that even the simplest of tasks seemed beyond my strength. Perhaps most surprising, when I tried to pray, my thoughts would drift to the discomfort, or the shallow breathing caused by the damaged heart made me fall asleep. It was frustrating. I couldn't work and I couldn't even ask God to let me live so I could spend more time with my family!

The inability to pray troubled me most. But as with all other human needs, the Creator knew this was happening to me. I would eventually recall He made two preparations for such occurrences: the prayer of the Spirit for us when we can't pray (Rom. 8:26), and the prayer of others on our behalf (James 5:16; Gal. 6:2).

What a comfort it was to know that the Holy Spirit was even then raising my concerns before the Father. What a gift also to hear from friends and family as they prayed for me. Then came another surprise: As my friends and family asked me what to pray for, it became clear that my answers to them were also being heard by God as prayers. What a gift it is in a time of uncertainty to be reminded God hears our heart even when we think we can't call out to Him.

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**God never leaves the voices of His children unheard.**

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September 29



## Fresh Faith

James Banks



*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* [Hebrews 10:23](#)

Read: [John 20:24–29](#)

Bible in a Year: [Isaiah 7–8](#); [Ephesians 2](#)

When our son was struggling with heroin addiction, if you had told me God would one day use our experience to encourage other families who face these kinds of battles, I would have had trouble believing it. God has a way of bringing good out of difficult circumstances that isn't always easy to see when you are going through them.

The apostle Thomas also didn't expect God to bring good out of the greatest challenge of his faith—Jesus's crucifixion. Thomas wasn't with the other disciples when Jesus came to them after the resurrection, and in his deep grief he insisted, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were . . . I will not believe” (John 20:25). But later, when Jesus appeared to all the disciples together, out of the dust of Thomas's doubts God's Spirit would inspire a striking statement of faith. When Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (v. 28), he was grasping the truth that Jesus was actually God in the flesh, standing right in front of him. It was a bold confession of faith that would encourage and inspire believers in every century that followed.

Our God is able to inspire fresh faith in our hearts, even in moments when we least expect it. We can always look forward to His faithfulness. Nothing is too hard for Him!

*Thank You, Lord, that Your love is stronger than our greatest difficulties—even our worst doubts or fears!*

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**God can change our doubts into bold statements of faith.**

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